

Mamadou N'Diaye Rose: The Mathematician of Rhythms, 1930-2015



"I never wanted to play blindly! I met the elders so that they could teach me the very precise language of drums that everybody recognized then: how to announce a bush fire, that a snake has bitten someone and what kind of snake, that a woman who has just got married has gone to the conjugal home and that the husband is happy with her."

Mamadou N'Diaye Rose

Source of the above quote: Blandy, Fran. Senegal's 'Human Treasure' Drummer Doudou Ndiaye Rose Dies Aged 85 (AFP [Yahoo.com] August 19, 2015; <http://news.yahoo.com/senegals-living-treasure-drummer-doudou-ndiaye-rose-dies-172415582.html>, accessed August 22, 2015).



Mamadou N'Diaye Rose (born Mamadou Ndiaye, July 28, 1930-August 19, 2015), nicknamed the mathematician of rhythms and the great master of the drums could lead several hundred drummers rhythms simultaneously, thus the Senegalese drummer, composer, researcher, percussion school founder, and band leader, and was the recognized modern master of Senegal's traditional drum, the sabar. His father was an accountant who did not particularly encourage him to pursue a music career, however he expressed his interest in drumming and traditional African percussion at the age of 7 years and he had a chance to meet El Hadj Mada Seck, the best drum major in Senegal, who became Rose's master for many years.

Rose was the father of a musical dynasty which includes some of the most successful traditional musicians of contemporary West Africa, and the founder and chief drum major of the Drummers of West Africa (all members of his family), and he also led an all-female drum group called Les Rosettes, composed entirely of his own daughters and granddaughters. Rose was purported to have developed 500 new rhythms, and, indeed, his music is quite complex, featuring ever-changing rhythmic structures which he conducted with his trademark vigorous style, and additionally, he also invented new types of drums.

Rose specialized in the sabar (a dance form that has 14 different musical components, also the name of a dance, as well as the lead drum of an ensemble; the ensemble popularized Sabar and thus, the drum is called Sabar Nder which consists of seven drums), he also played many other types of drum such as *saourouba*, *assicot*, *bougarabou*, *meung meung*, *lambe*, *n'der*, *gorom babass*, and *khine*. The child of a Griot family, he began performing in the 1930s, but continued to make his living as a plumber for some time.

Shortly before Senegalese independence he performed with Josephine Baker, and became a favorite amongst Dakar audiences. In 1960 he was a member of the Senegalese National Ballet, and in the 1970s he headed his own group, the Doudou Ndiaye Rose Orchestra. He has also collaborated with Miles Davis and the Rolling Stones. In 1988 he was discovered internationally at the Nancy Jazz Festival (Nancy, France) where he was accompanied by 50 drummers

And in 2006 he was declared a "living human treasure" by the UN, a title bestowed on those highly skilled in traditional dance or music and who transmit their knowledge to younger generations. Rose's most well-known album was *Djabote* (Real World CDRW43) recorded on the Isle of Gorée in March 1991, recorded in one week with his group of fifty drummers and the Julien Jouga's Choir, and an eighty member all-female choir.

He also performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Alan Stivell ("Again"), Miles Davis, the Rolling Stones, Peter Gabriel, Kodo and Bill Bruford; featured in the remix of "The Warning" by Nine Inch Nails on the album "Year Zero Remixed" and remixed by Stefan Goodchild. And he also recorded *Djabote: Senegalese Drumming & Song from Master Drummer Doudou Ndiaye Rose* (1993) directed by Béatrice Soulé and Eric Millot. Montpelier (Vermont: Multicultural Media).

Mamadou N'Diaye Rose was the father of 36 children who now form a musical dynasty as they play in troupes like the drummers of West Africa consisting of his children and grandchildren, as well as the all-female group called les Rosettes. In regards to his dynasty, in 2010 Rose said "my children learned the language of percussion well. I can even no longer play and just listen to them" (<http://qz.com/483814/senegals-master-drummer-and-human-treasure-doudou-ndiaye-rose-has-died/>. Accessed August 22, 2015).